

Rhode Island Committee on House Finance, Wednesday, 4/14/2021

Dear Chairperson and House Finance Committee:

My name is Kassie Hawkins *and I live in Warwick, Rhode Island*. I stand in support of House Bill No. 6122. This budget article is crucial to improving the health and safety of pregnant individuals, and particularly impacts Black and Brown families. Doulas provide emotional, physical, and informational support to a person who is expecting, is experiencing labor, or has recently given birth. A doula's purpose is to help people have a safe, memorable, and empowering birthing experience. Insurance coverage for doula services could lead to 23% fewer C-sections as well as reducing medical spending on unnecessary procedures.

I believe that doulas can alleviate Black and low income maternal morbidity and mortality in Rhode Island because a doula is able to advocate for folks who may feel uncomfortable advocating for themselves in a medical setting as a result of previous negative experience(s) with medical providers due to systemic and institutional racism. Doulas also know the questions to ask in order to offer options to the patient that they may not otherwise have considered.

I support this legislation because I want my Black, Brown, and low income fellow Rhode Islanders to have access to quality prenatal care. Everyone deserves to have an empowering, safe, beautiful birthing experience that positively impacts their health outcomes. And doulas are providing a valuable service to families as well as the community as a whole and deserve to be paid fairly.

In closing, I urge you to support Senate Bill No. 484 Perinatal Doula Services and bring it to the floor for consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Kassie Hawkins", with a stylized, cursive script.

Kassie Hawkins